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# NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. CCCXCIII.

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AUGUST, 1889.

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## THE MONEY SENT TO JOHNSTOWN.

BY THE HON. JAMES A. BEAVER, GOVERNOR OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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THE APPALACHIAN range or system of mountains includes the head-waters of the streams which water and furnish the drainage for at least two-thirds of the State of Pennsylvania. The Alleghenies, which constitute the principal member of the system, divide the waters which flow eastward to the Atlantic and south-westward to the Gulf of Mexico. On the 31st of May of the present year peculiar meteorological conditions existed along this system of mountains, which resulted in a rainfall of unprecedented volume. In some localities more than six inches of rain fell within twenty-four hours. In others great cloud-bursts deluged the immediate vicinity, and in a few minutes raised the small streams as never before. There seemed to be literally a war of elements, waged with differing degrees of intensity, but kept up during the day throughout the entire region. The statement of the fact that three inches of rain are sufficient to make an ordinary freshet will show at once what results were to be expected from such a rainfall as occurred on the ill-fated day to which reference has been made. As a result of this unprecedented storm, some twenty counties of Pennsylvania were visited by floods which had no parallel in the history of the region. From Tioga County on the New York line to Bedford on the Maryland

line, through the great mountain centre of the State, this flood carried destruction, desolation, and death in its onward sweep.

The streams which constitute the West Branch of the Susquehanna and the Juniata River on the eastern slope of the Alleghenies, and those which form the Conemaugh on the western slope, were principally affected. The most unusual floods heretofore occurring, which are remembered because of their destruction of life and property, took place in Pennsylvania in the years 1786 and 1865. In some localities the waters were higher during both of these freshets than in that of the present year. But the Susquehanna River, at Harrisburg, which is below the mouth of the Juniata River, was eighteen inches higher in the present year than in 1786, and twenty-seven inches higher than in 1865, notwithstanding the fact that the North Branch, which is one of the principal tributaries of the main river, was not extraordinarily high. This will, in a measure, indicate what the rise in the West Branch and in the Juniata must have been. The counties bordering on the West Branch and its tributaries, and those along the different branches of the Juniata, were all more or less seriously affected by this extraordinary freshet. In many of them lives were lost, homes and all their contents swept away, and property to the extent of probably fifty millions of dollars utterly destroyed. At the city of Williamsport, which is the centre of a large lumber-manufacturing trade, it is estimated that logs gathered there for the purpose of being manufactured into lumber, to the value of four millions of dollars, were swept away in a few hours. Other losses of a similar character, but not so great in extent, occurred at other points both above and below Williamsport. Railroad and county bridges across these streams were swept away by the score. All telegraphic and telephonic communication was entirely broken up, and the people for days, and in some instances for more than a week, were entirely isolated from the outside world.

Terrible as the scenes and incidents throughout the theatre of the operations of this storm on the eastern slope of the Alleghenies were, they were all dwarfed into littleness and comparative insignificance by the great calamity which befel the people of the Conemaugh Valley on the western slope of the mountain. The Conemaugh River, formed by the confluence of the north and south forks, is further augmented by

the water of Stony Creek, which joins it at Johnstown. Along the narrow valley which skirts the river above Johnstown were built some eight or nine different villages, most of them incorporated, which constituted a busy, thriving community, largely engaged in the manufacture of iron and steel and their various products, and also in other industries which provided for the wants of the numerous population engaged in these manufactures. The rainfall of the region was of itself sufficient to cause an extraordinary flood, destructive alike to life and property. A large reservoir situated on the south fork of the Conemaugh, built originally as one of the feeders to the Pennsylvania Canal, but which had long since been abandoned for that purpose, and was used as a fishing preserve for a company of gentlemen who had purchased it several years ago, was so suddenly and rapidly raised above its banks that all efforts to relieve the pressure upon its sustaining walls were unavailing. The dam suddenly gave way, precipitating the great body of water gathered there, augmented by the unusual rainfall, into the valley below.

The flood which had occasioned solicitude and alarm before, reënforced by the waters of this immense reservoir, came upon the people of this devoted region with such velocity and power that all attempts to escape its ravages were unavailing, notwithstanding the fact that all possible efforts to give notice of the impending calamity were made by those who were aware of its imminent approach. To add to the difficulties of the situation, just below the confluence of the Conemaugh and Stony Creek had been built by the Pennsylvania Railroad a large seven-arch stone bridge, of magnificent proportions and strength, which served to some extent as a breakwater, and against which the débris created by the flood was piled, causing an eddy so swift and strong that for a time the waters actually flowed up-stream and carried dwelling-houses and other buildings in large numbers upon their angry bosom. Upon the subsidence of the waters, in the course of a few hours, a busy community of from thirty to forty thousand people found itself utterly prostrated, and, to a large extent, practically destroyed. The loss of life resulting from this catastrophe is variously estimated at from five to ten thousand persons. The loss of property, impossible accurately to estimate, aggregated many millions.

Cut off from communication with the outside world by rail or

wire, it was difficult to obtain information. The morning papers of the 1st of June had intimations of a great disaster, and by the evening of that day some particulars of the ruin wrought were given to the public. The extent of the disaster was partially disclosed in the papers of Sunday morning, June 2. The cry of distress, which the facts alone presented, was heard throughout the length and breadth of the land. Fortunately, communication with the West was less seriously disturbed than with the East, and with the most commendable promptness and generosity the city of Pittsburg rushed to the relief of the sufferers. Philadelphia began her work of charity on Sunday, and made the most prompt and vigorous efforts to forward to the sufferers such help as could be hastily furnished. The Governor of Ohio, with his usual promptness, placed tents and other relief at the disposal of the sufferers, and despatched them at once from Columbus. On Saturday, the 1st of June, the response of the country and of the world to this wail of distress began, and has continued in an uninterrupted stream of beneficence, which has probably never been equalled, under like circumstances, in the history of our race.

An English paper, in speaking of the catastrophe at Johnstown, described it as the greatest calamity which ever befel the English-speaking race at a single blow. This description is, perhaps, not exaggerated. More lives have been lost in a single battle; but lives are expected to be lost in battle, and to its uncertain fortunes men intrust themselves with the knowledge of its fatal probabilities. In this case infancy and age were alike exposed to the fury of the storm and the horrors of the flood. Sex, sickness, and sorrow afforded no exemption. All were alike exposed, with the chances against the weak.

It is not intended to give any description of the horrors of the situation or of the details of the suffering which ensued. The baldest outline of events has been given in order to show that the calamity, although unprecedented, has had its sorrows and sufferings mitigated by a sweetness of charity and a wealth of benefaction which are also unparalleled.

This article is hastily prepared at the request of the Editor of *THE REVIEW*, not to describe the sufferings or to picture the sorrows of our stricken communities, but rather to show what has been done to relieve the one and mitigate the other.

Twenty of the sixty-seven counties of Pennsylvania have suf-

ferred severely by the late floods. In ten of them there has been loss of life. The suffering and sorrow have been the same in kind and, in a sense, in degree, but differ largely in extent. Into eleven of these counties help from outside of them has gone. Several have taken pride in caring for their own people, and have nobly met the requirements and responsibilities of the situation. Many individual cases of suffering are being discovered and developed, and many more will doubtless come to light as time passes, but for all, whether suffering singly, in families, or in communities, provision has been made by a generous people quick to hear and always ready to respond to the cry of distress or of need.

Sorrow is essentially and almost necessarily selfish. "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" has been, and is, the almost universal wail of suffering humanity. In view of this, it has been interesting to note the prominence which has been accorded to Johnstown among the several suffering communities of the State. It is not uncommon to have an application for assistance come couched in language like this: "Next after Johnstown, we have suffered more than any other locality in the State." The precedence given to the sufferers in the Conemaugh Valley among the several desolated communities themselves has also been accorded them in the sympathy and the benefactions of the country and the world.

What has been done in response to the bitter cry for help which their destruction and ruin wrung from the people to whom has been given by common consent this sad preëminence? What is the amount of the benefactions of generous donors which have flowed in a steady stream since the first day of June, and which continue to flow, with less volume, perhaps, but with no less sympathetic impulses to the present day? How have the benefactions of the people been applied, and what plans have been adopted for the relief and help of the beneficiaries of this fund? These are questions in which donors and recipients are alike interested, and which have an interest beyond the present case, as affecting great questions of sociology which are seeking, and have long sought in vain, for a final answer.

As already intimated, quick as the cry of distress came the generous response. First, in contributions of food and clothing from those nearest the scene of disaster, followed by donations of money from all parts of the civilized globe.

On the third day of June the Executive of Pennsylvania issued an appeal to the people of the United States, based upon reliable data which he was enabled that day for the first time to gather by direct communication with Johnstown. In this communication the facts attending the calamity in the Conemaugh Valley were briefly set forth, and the necessity for immediate and continued help for the suffering people was emphasized. Drexel & Co., previously designated by the Philadelphia committee, William R. Thompson & Co., previously named by the Pittsburg committee, and Jacob C. Bomberger, Esq., of Harrisburg, were designated as depositaries of funds intended for the relief of the sufferers by the floods in Pennsylvania.

Money in considerable amounts had been contributed in several localities on Sunday, the 2d of June, but on the following day the steady stream of beneficence began to flow and has continued without cessation until the present time (July 12th). At this date there have come into the hands of the Executive of Pennsylvania, and been deposited with the treasurer of the fund at Harrisburg, over one million of dollars.

The depositaries at Philadelphia and Pittsburg have each received almost eight hundred thousand dollars. The local committee at Johnstown has received in the neighborhood of two hundred thousand dollars. Various other local committees have received direct contributions for their immediate needs from their own localities and elsewhere aggregating probably two hundred thousand dollars ; so that the grand aggregate of contributions in money for the relief of sufferers by the floods in Pennsylvania will reach, if it has not already reached, the magnificent sum of three millions of dollars. To this must be added considerable sums still held by local committees, and the large contributions of supplies in kind furnished by the generous in many parts of the country who desired to afford speedy relief.

Nothing has been said as to the work of the beneficial and charitable organizations of the country which were early upon the ground at Johnstown with substantial aid and well-directed efforts for the alleviation of the suffering. Of the value of this work there can be no question, and it will ever be gratefully acknowledged by those who were its recipients. No means are at hand now, however, of estimating the amount expended through these several organizations. It is known to have been quite large, and

the good effects of it will be felt for many days to come. It is hoped that, when the official report of the work is prepared, statistics may be gathered and suitable mention made of it.

A million of dollars is a large amount of money for a single individual to handle. Its disbursement under any circumstances involves great responsibility; but to one who has had experience in philanthropic work, and who has endeavored to meet both the wishes of donors and recipients of a charity fund, the responsibility assumes much larger proportions, and is undertaken with great reluctance. The Executive of Pennsylvania, early recognizing the fact that the amount of money named was likely to come into his hands for disbursement among the sufferers by floods in that State, sought to relieve himself of the burden of responsibility by calling to his aid gentlemen of well-known experience in business and philanthropic work, so that the disbursement of the fund should not rest upon his single individual judgment or responsibility. It was early ascertained also that with separate committees at Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Johnstown, Williamsport, and other points, acting independently of each other, and without knowledge of disbursements and appropriations made by each, great confusion was likely to ensue, with probable duplication and consequent injustice. It was, therefore, necessary to have the operations for relief unified as much as possible, and brought into consistency and harmony. It was thereupon determined to appoint a Commission, consisting of representatives from the various principal committees, so that the knowledge of what had been done, and the plans and purposes of each of the several committees, might be secured for the information and guidance of all. This Commission, consisting of ten gentlemen, was appointed on the eleventh day of June, and under its direction and management all the work of relief throughout the entire flooded districts has been conducted.

The members of the Commission made a personal examination of those localities which were considered to have suffered most by the late floods. Supplies of food and clothing had previously been furnished wherever needed. Where local committees were found in charge of relief, doing efficient work, and able to furnish the Commission with data upon which immediate distribution for the relief of sufferers could be made, money was at once appropriated and placed in the hands of



these committees, to be used in such a way as their judgment might indicate. A position upon the Commission was offered to four different gentlemen of Johnstown, three of whom, by reason of the pressure of their private business, were unable to accept the trust, while the fourth, who was injured in the flood, was absent from home, and has but lately signified a like decision in regard to the matter. Being unable to secure a representative who by his personal knowledge could acquaint the members of the Commission with the immediate needs of the community, and being without data upon which intelligent action could be based, a representative of the Commission reluctantly undertook the work, and went to Johnstown with the intention of remaining there and giving personal attention to the gathering of data upon which the Commission might act in the distribution of the funds committed to its hands by a generous public. It is believed that this member of the Commission, coöperating with the local committee at Johnstown, which has been arduously engaged in gathering statistics, but has not yet been able to make a full report, will be able to meet the requirements of the situation, and bring the wants of the people more directly to the attention of the Commission. It is believed also that the preliminary work is about completed, and the losses and present condition of the inhabitants of the Conemaugh Valley are so far ascertained that intelligent efforts may be directed toward their more substantial relief.

The members of the Commission have regarded, and now regard, the funds at their command and disposal as a sacred trust, to be disbursed in accordance with the wishes of the donors, and in such a way as to meet, as far as possible, the reasonable expectations of those entitled to receive them. They regard this fund as one which must be disbursed upon the principles of charity, and not as an indemnity for losses in general sustained by individuals, without regard to their financial condition. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to ascertain from each individual the amount of his losses, the amount saved from the wreck, the number dependent upon him or her, the ability to maintain those who are dependent, the relief, if any, obtained from other sources, and other like information upon which intelligent action can be based. This is an arduous work, requiring much time, particularly in a community whose very foundations have been destroyed and which is still in a chaotic condition. The wonder is that, with

each individual so thoroughly buried in his own sorrow, this work has been so far advanced and so well done by the local committee. Although not yet completed, it is believed that enough has been ascertained to make a distribution to those who are most needy an easy matter in the immediate future. The distribution of money will be made, not so much as an indemnity for losses as a means of helping the recipients to help themselves; that being regarded as the best charity which gives a man command of himself and of his remaining resources, and enables him to put them to the best account.

It is not to be inferred, from what has been said in regard to substantial relief, that relief has not been furnished hitherto. From the first day of June down to the present time, relief, in a constant stream, has flowed to the sufferers of the Conemaugh Valley. Food and clothing have been furnished *ad libitum*. No one whose wants have been made known, or who could be induced to make known his wants, has suffered for the necessities of life. Transportation has been furnished to all the inhabitants of the valley who desired to go elsewhere for recuperation, or for the purpose of seeking employment, or for visiting friends. Whenever needed, plain furniture for housekeeping has been furnished upon application.

Early recognizing the importance of opening the channels of trade and restoring the *media* of supply and demand, the Commission, after consultation with the New York committee, directed the erection upon two small public squares, placed at their disposal by the municipal authorities, of forty-eight small store-rooms, which are placed, as soon as completed, in the hands of the Citizens' Committee, to be awarded for such business as, in their judgment, is most needed in the community. This has already stimulated trade, and is restoring business to its wonted channels. Merchants who are able to build on their own ground have erected temporary buildings, and still others have cleaned out their former places of business, and are engaged in their ordinary trade.

The members of the Chicago Committee of Relief, after visiting the ground, and with the experience which was the result of their disastrous fire, generously donated to the community one hundred portable houses, ten feet by twenty feet in size, which it was supposed could be erected in a few hours, and would afford temporary shelter until something better could be provided. At the

earnest solicitation of the local committee, the Flood Relief Commission also contracted for two hundred houses from Chicago. One hundred were portable ones, ten by twenty feet, with a door at each end and two windows at each side, to be divided as the occupants might deem advisable. Another hundred houses were furnished, of a much better character, sixteen by twenty-four feet in size, making a desirable shelter; they can be divided into three rooms, and furnish pleasant accommodations for a family of four or five. Two hundred houses of a still more substantial character have been contracted for, each of which is two stories in height and contains four rooms. These the contractors have engaged to build as rapidly as they are wanted or as the sites can be furnished for the same. As many more such houses as may be needed will be built as required.

Some difficult and perplexing questions confront the Commission in the discharge of this part of their duty. Such houses, when built, are, of course, intended for the benefit of sufferers who have lost their homes and are unable to rebuild. Much of the desolated district is unfit to build upon. It is, therefore, necessary to secure ground elsewhere. Houses built upon the land of another might be claimed by the owner of the land. Importunate creditors might sweep away the benefactions so charitably intended only for the good of the sufferers. These and kindred questions are to be met, and met wisely. The representative of the Commission at Johnstown is a lawyer, has had much experience upon the bench, and is admirably qualified to handle just such questions, so that the wishes of the donors may be respected and the wants of the recipients carefully provided for.

Provision has also been made for the immediate distribution of a half million of dollars to the most needy of the sufferers of the Conemaugh Valley out of the funds at the disposal of the Commission, in the hope and with the expectation that the beneficial effects of such distribution, in stimulating building operations and restoring hope to the people, will more than counterbalance the evil effects which almost necessarily follow the distribution of cash to the recipients of charity; this sum being in addition to \$150,000 already distributed by the Johnstown Committee to families in actual need at the rate of \$10 *per capita*. It is, of course, well understood that, in the ordinary distribution of charity, it is unsafe and undesirable to intrust money to the

hands of those who are to be relieved. Although the force of this rule is acknowledged by the Commission as applicable to ordinary cases of charity, it must be remembered that this is an extraordinary case, requires extraordinary treatment, and its exigencies are not likely to be met by the enforcement of ordinary rules.

In the work of relief so far carried on, the Commission and its representative, and the committees represented upon it, have expended between one and two million dollars in actual outlay and in contracts already made, the exact amount not being at present attainable, since bills have not in all cases been rendered.

In addition to the relief work thus carried on, the State, under the authority and supervision of the State Board of Health, has conducted an efficient and thoroughly well-organized work in clearing the channels of the rivers and removing the accumulations of débris from the streets of the desolated districts, at an expenditure of something like a quarter of a million dollars. It is entirely safe, therefore, to say that the work done through these various agencies for the relief of the Conemaugh Valley has cost, up to the present time, between a million and a half and two millions of dollars. The work of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, and giving cheer to the despondent, in the hands of the Relief Commission, will be carried on without interruption, and its operations extended as rapidly as it is possible to do so intelligently, and with due regard to the rights both of the donors and the recipients of the funds intrusted to its keeping. The police work of the State will also be continued until all nuisances are abated, and Johnstown and its neighboring boroughs shall be pronounced to be in good sanitary condition.

Provision for the widows and orphans, of more than a mere temporary character, must undoubtedly be made with care and discrimination. Continued relief for bodily wants must be furnished as long as the necessity exists, and reasonable provision made for such needs in the future. The funds in the hands of the Commission, so far as they can be made to meet the demands of those who are entitled to help, can be used legitimately and with beneficial effect in restoring the people of the various desolated regions to family life and to a position so far independent as to enable them to help themselves. It is well to reiterate the

the plan and purpose of the Commission, so far as at present advised, to place people upon their feet and put them in a situation in which they can stand and walk alone. The dangers incident to the situation, which all experience has shown to be real, are appreciated, and no effort will be spared to reduce to a minimum the ill effects which must necessarily follow in the wake of a great wave of charity such as this.

Errors have been, and doubtless will be, committed. What seems to be tardiness to one is haste to another. The work of the Commission must be discharged, first, with reference to the obligations which are imposed upon it by the generous donors of the fund and their wishes in its distribution, and, second, with reference to meeting, so far as may be reasonable and just, the expectations of those who consider themselves entitled to its benefits.

This great charity fund, which constitutes a monument to the generous impulses of our common humanity, comes from many quarters. It is believed that every State and Territory of our country is represented in it. Our neighbors to the north of us and those to the south of us are also generous contributors to its upbuilding. England, Ireland, France, Germany, and other foreign countries share in donations to its fair proportions. A minute and careful record of all the contributions has been kept, and it is hoped that its publication, when the work of the Commission is completed, will show the source from which every cent has come. The donation, distribution, and reception of this fund give rise to many problems in social science, and the peculiarities of the situation, particularly in the Conemaugh Valley, raise very grave questions in regard to municipal government, which are full of interest, but which cannot now even be mentioned. Notwithstanding the fact that the government of some seven or eight municipalities was for the time utterly overthrown and in chaos, the strength of our institutions has been demonstrated, first, by the efforts of the civil authorities of Cambria County, in which the scene of the greatest devastation lies, and, second, upon the request of the sheriff of that county, by the presence of a small regiment of troops, not exceeding four hundred in number, which has now been reduced to less than one hundred and fifty.

The details of relief upon the ground at Johnstown were conducted, first, under the auspices of the Pittsburg Committee,

and afterwards under the supervision of the Adjutant-General of Pennsylvania. This entire work has now been transferred to the hands of the citizens of this region, who are undoubtedly able to conduct it successfully in the future. The police work of the State will be carried on under the direction and the immediate supervision of the secretary of the State Board of Health.

If the fidelity, discretion, and devotion of the Commission having charge of the distribution of the great charity herein referred to shall be, in any degree, equal to the generosity which has prompted it, the full measure of the hopes of its members will be reached, and the desires of the donors and recipients of the funds fully met when this work has been completed. This is not to be expected. The members of the Commission are human, but this charity, so sublime in its proportions, and so beautiful in its inception, is something more than human.

JAMES A. BEAVER.